

Strengthening Families

A Protective Factors Framework

CONNECTICUT

The Children's Trust Fund was selected by the Center for the Study of Social Policy in 2007 to serve as lead agency to implement Strengthening Families in Connecticut. The Trust Fund encouraged several other organizations to become involved in this effort and support work to promote Strengthening Families principles in the state. These agencies included the Department of Children and Families, Building Parent Power, the City of Hartford and Annie E. Casey Family Services. The Trust also implemented several Strengthening Families efforts directly. A few of these follow:

The Nurturing Families Network Home Visiting Program

The Nurturing Families Network is a *Parents as Teachers* evidenced based home visiting program that provides screening and assessment, group support and intensive home visiting for new parents who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. The program focuses on strengthening families and fostering Protective Factors including, *parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional development of children.*

Each year, the Nurturing Families Network serves approximately 2,000 families in home visiting services and 600 families in parenting groups. The program screens about 7,200 and provides supportive services to 1,700 low risk families annually. It also includes a small program to treat maternal depression known as the in-Home Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Program.

The Nurturing Families Network operates in or in conjunction with all 29 birthing hospitals in the state of Connecticut. Its services are provided at 40 locations with 11 more under development. The 11 new home visiting sites are being funded through the Maternal Infant Child Evidenced Based Home Visiting Grant. With the new sites, services will be provided by about 175 home visitors including 21 fathering home visitors.

Home Visiting Measurement Tools that Assess Protective Factors

Concrete Support in Times of Need:

COMMUNITY LIFE SKILLS SCALE (CLSS)

The CLSS measures a parents' ability to increase their overall quality of life and to reduce levels of personal/family stress. It shows what community resources families use and provides insight into their ability to engage with and rely on others.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

ADULT-ADOLESCENT PARENTING INVENTORY (AAPI)

- The goal in utilizing the AAPI is to gather information regarding an individual's attitudes and beliefs toward parenting and child rearing. The responses to the items on the inventory provide an indication of the individual's abilities to parent children in a non-abusive manner. The most important use of the AAPI is assessment for treatment and education.

AGES AND STAGES QUESTIONNAIRES, THIRD EDITION (ASQ-3): A PARENT-COMPLETED, CHILD MONITORING SYSTEM,

- Screening questionnaires administered to infants and young children to determine if their development appears to be on schedule. Results may indicate the need for further evaluation for possible early intervention services.

PARENTING STRESS INDEX, 3RD ED. (PSI)

- The PSI is designed for the early identification of parenting and family characteristics that fail to promote normal development and functioning in children, children with behavioral and emotional problems, and parents who are at-risk for dysfunctional parenting.

Social and Emotional Development of Children

CHILD ABUSE POTENTIAL INVENTORY (CAP INVENTORY)

- The CAP Inventory was designed as a screening tool for the detection of physical child abuse to be used by protective service workers in their investigations of reported child abuse cases.

Parental Resilience

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Social Connections

FAMILY STRESS CHECKLIST (FSC) (a.k.a. KEMPE FAMILY STRESS ASSESSMENT/CHECKLIST OR CARROLL-SCHMIDT PARENTING CHECKLIST)

- The FSC is a 10-item scale that has been used to predict a parent's future risk of maltreating his or her children.

Training and credentialing requirements for home visitors receive address protective factors:

- *Parents as Teachers*: Five day home visitor training on the National Parents as Teachers Model and curriculum. The training reviews the Personal Visit Planning Guide and how the plan aligns with the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. The training also reviews a Tool Kit that parent educators can use during visits and one of the "leaves" of this kit lists the Protective Factors.
- *The Nurturing Families Home Visitor Credential (Established in 2006)*
 - **Home Visitor Credential**: Credential required for all home visitors within two years of employment. Requires training in Ages and Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition, Ages and Stages: Social and Emotional, Shaken Baby Prevention, Nurturing Families Core, Family Development Credential, Touch Points, Parents as Teachers (0-3), Parents as Teachers (3-Kindergarden)
 - **Senior Home Visitor Credential**: NFN Senior Home Visitor Credential awarded with verification of 4 years of employment as an NFN home visitor, completion of required professional development activities, completion of Family Development Leadership Credential (35 hours), recommendations from the clinical supervisor and program manager, and documentation of completion of advanced training required.
- *The Period of Purple Crying and Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention*
 - All home visitors receive training on the *Period of Purple Crying, a new way to help parents understand this time in their babies' lives when they cry more than at any other time*. The Protective Factors associated with the Strengthening Families Approach are integrated into the training.

- All home visitors, once trained on this model, raise awareness and provide concrete tools and education for parents during home visits that will increase awareness of the Period of Purple Crying and Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention. The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund provides funding, training and technical assistance to three Connecticut hospitals: UCONN Health Center, Sharon Hospital and Connecticut Children's Medical Center on the Period of Purple Crying.
- *Dr. Stephen Bavolack Nurturing Parenting Training* for Home Visitors, Clinical Supervisors and Nurturing Group staff. The annual training focuses on the Five Constructs of Nurturing Parenting and how to incorporate this approach with home visiting families and nurturing group families.
- *Five Day Core home visitor training*: The training focuses on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors; the cultural broker model and the role of a home visitor; strengths based principles and engaging parents; understanding the components involved in scheduling, preparing, conducting and documenting home visits; and the social and emotional development of children.
- *ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE training*: The ASQ-3 questionnaires check children's general development. The results help determine if a child's development is on schedule. The ASQ: SE questionnaires check children's social and emotional development.
- *Family Development Credential*: Home Visitors take 90 hours of classes based on the Empowerment Skills for Family Workers (Forest 2003); complete a portfolio documenting their ability to apply these concepts and skills; and pass a standardized exam.

Additional Trust Fund Activities that Strengthen Families

The Connecticut Children's Trust Fund strengthens protective factors for families through several of its contracted programs and services and through presentations and other activities. Several examples follow.

Help Me Grow: Help Me Grow is a comprehensive, statewide system for early identification and referral for services for children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems. Parents, pediatricians and other providers are given information and training in how to recognize the early signs of developmental problems and how to contact Help Me Grow when they have a concern.

- Callers to Help Me Grow are screened by trained care coordinators at the Child Development Infoline. Children are connected to services that can help. Parents are also referred to services that can address parenting and other needs.
- Regional community breakfasts are held so that providers can come together and maximize the use of existing services. There have been 72 community breakfasts

in 13 communities this year. Participants include health, education and human services providers working in early care and education.

- Help Me Grow trains pediatricians and family physicians to identify children at risk for developmental delays and to provide ongoing developmental monitoring. Nearly 200 pediatricians and family physicians have been trained.
- Help Me Grow Campaign: During 2013 and 2014 a statewide public awareness and outreach Campaign will be conducted to raise awareness of early brain development and promote universal developmental surveillance and screening in Connecticut. Help Me Grow will integrate the Strengthening Families Approach and the Protective Factors framework into its Help Me Grow Campaign through Community Café's that will be conducted during the summer of 2014. Families will gather in café- like settings to have meaningful conversations about early brain development and the need for universal development surveillance strengthening the Protective Factors in the process.

Community Café: The Trust Fund staff are presenting at the 2013 Childhood Conversations Conference on enhancing the Protective Factors through implementation of Community Café's for parents model.

The Trust Fund Staff facilitated trainings for Community Renewal Team early care and education staff on the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment and Strengthening Families 101 training

Presentations: The Trust Fund staff presented at the February 2012 New Britain Department of Children and Families Early Childhood Development Training on the importance of developmental surveillance through utilization of the ASQ-3 and the ASQ-SE.

The Trust Fund staff presented at a recent CT DCF Head Start Partnership meeting to share information about the Trust Fund's Strengthening Families/Protective Factors initiatives, trainings, and activities.

Family Development Training and Credentialing program: The Trust Fund is the state coordinator for the Family Development Credential (FDC) and coordinates 90 hour (FDC) trainings for front line human service and early childhood professionals throughout Connecticut. Trust Fund staff also facilitate the 35 hour FDC for Leaders Training.

Legal Services to Support Families: The Trust Fund supports the Connecticut Children's Law Center which provides:

- legal advocates to children through representation,
- staffing a free legal help-line that gives information and referrals on topics
- related to family law and children's rights
- low-cost mediation services and parent education

- training and support for lawyers who represent children
- advocacy for positive systemic change regarding the rights and treatment of children

Support for Kinship and Respite: CT Probate Kinship and Respite Fund, which grants funds up to \$500 per child, can be used to purchase necessary items for children including school uniforms and winter coats, hats, mittens and boots. Funds from this grant may also be used for health services and enrichment activities such as school and summer camp tuition. The Grandparents and Relatives Respite Fund provides up to \$2,000 to relatives serving as court-appointed guardians and may be used for housing, food, transportation and other family expenses, education, clothing and day-care and babysitting expenses for the child.